

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for pricing a cryptographic service on a network utilizing at least
2 one cryptoserver, comprising:
 - 3 (a) receiving a request for a cryptographic service from a user utilizing a
4 network, wherein the request is received by a cryptographic service provider;
 - 5 (b) generating a contract based on a variable pricing scheme in response to the
6 request; and
 - 7 (c) sending the contract from the cryptographic service provider to the user
8 utilizing the network.
- 1 2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the cryptographic service provider
2 selects one of a plurality of cryptoservers to perform the cryptographic
3 service.
- 1 3. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the plurality of cryptoservers are
2 commercial services competing for customers.
- 1 4. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the plurality of cryptoservers are
2 part of a single distributed service.
- 1 5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the variable pricing scheme is
2 based on at least one of: computational burden of a cryptoserver during
3 performance of the service, distance between the cryptoserver and the user,
4 congestion of the network during performance of the service, and rating of
5 the cryptoserver performing the service.

6 The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the variable pricing scheme is
auction-based.

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- 1 13. The computer program as recited in claim 11, wherein the variable pricing
2 scheme is based on at least one of a data load of a cryptoserver during
3 performance of the service, a distance between the cryptoserver and the user,
4 a congestion of the network during performance of the service, and a rating
5 of the cryptoserver performing the service.

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13. The computer program as recited in claim 11, wherein the variable pricing scheme is auction-based.

- 1 15. A system for pricing a cryptographic service on a network utilizing at least
2 one cryptoserver, comprising:
- 3 (a) a network;
 - 4 (b) a cryptoserver for providing a cryptographic service;
 - 5 (c) logic that receives a request for the cryptographic service from a user
6 utilizing the network, wherein the request is received by a cryptographic
7 service provider;
 - 8 (b) logic that generates a contract based on a variable pricing scheme in response
9 to the request; and
 - 10 (c) logic that sends the contract from the cryptographic service provider to the
11 user utilizing the network.

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- 1 16. The system as recited in claim 15, wherein the cryptographic service
2 provider selects one of a plurality of cryptoservers to perform the
3 cryptographic service.

- 1 17. The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the plurality of cryptoservers are
2 commercial services competing for customers.

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- 1 18. The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the plurality of cryptoservers are
2 part of a single distributed service.
- 1 19. The system as recited in claim 15, wherein the variable pricing scheme is
2 based on at least one of: data load of a cryptoserver during performance of
3 the service, distance between the cryptoserver and the user, congestion of the
4 network during performance of the service, and rating of the cryptoserver
5 performing the service.
- 1 20. The system as recited in claim 15, wherein the variable pricing scheme is
2 auction-based.
- 1 21. The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the cryptographic service
2 provider receives bids for performing the cryptographic service from the
3 user.
- 1 22. The method as recited in claim 19, wherein a plurality of cryptoservers bid
2 for providing the cryptographic service.
- 1 23. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the cryptographic service
2 provider is a cryptoserver.
- 1 24. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the auction is conducted securely
2 as a cryptographic protocol by one or more cryptoservers.